

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended) A method of making an optical fiber preform comprising the steps of:
 - inserting a first consolidated glass rod into a first glass tube;
 - heating the first consolidated glass rod and the first glass tube; and
 - flowing a ~~carrier~~ gas comprising oxygen and an alkali metal vapor between the first consolidated glass rod and the first glass tube wherein the alkali metal vapor comprises an alkali metal selected from the group consisting of K, Na, Li, Cs, Rb, and combinations thereof.
2. (currently amended) The method according to claim 1 further comprising the step of collapsing the first glass tube onto the first consolidated glass rod to form a second glass rod.
3. (currently amended) The method according to claim 2 wherein the second glass rod comprises an an ~~[[peak]]~~ alkali metal oxide concentration greater than about 0.01 wt. %.
4. (currently amended) The method according to claim 2 wherein the second glass rod comprises an an ~~[[peak]]~~ alkali metal oxide concentration greater than about 0.1 wt. %.
5. (withdrawn) The method according to claim 1 further comprising the step of removing the first glass rod from the first glass tube.
6. (original) The method according to claim 2 further comprising the step of drawing the second glass rod to form a third glass rod.

7. (withdrawn) The method according to claim 5 further comprising the step of forming additional glass on the first glass rod.
8. (withdrawn) The method according to claim 7 wherein forming additional glass comprises depositing glass soot.
9. (currently amended) The method according to claim 1 wherein the first consolidated glass rod comprises GeO_2 .
10. (original) The method according to claim 1 wherein the first glass tube comprises F.
11. (currently amended) The method according to claim 1 wherein the first consolidated glass rod in the inserting step comprises less than about 20 ppb by weight OH.
12. (currently amended) The method according to claim 1 wherein the first consolidated glass rod in the inserting step comprises less than about 0.05 wt. % chlorine.
13. (original) The method according to claim 6 further comprising the step of forming additional glass on the third glass rod to form an optical fiber preform.
14. (original) The method according to claim 13 further comprising the step of drawing the optical fiber preform into an optical fiber.
15. (original) The method according to claim 1 further comprising the step of forming additional glass on an inside surface of the first glass tube prior to the inserting step.
16. (new) A method of making an optical fiber preform comprising the steps of:
 - a) inserting a first consolidated glass rod into a first glass tube;

b) heating the first consolidated glass rod and the first glass tube while flowing oxygen and a vapor of an alkali metal between the first consolidated glass rod and the first glass tube to dope the glass rod and the glass tube with the alkali metal;

c) collapsing the first glass tube onto the first consolidated glass rod to form a second glass rod; and

wherein the alkali metal is selected from the group consisting of K, Na, Li, Cs, Rb, and combinations thereof.

17. (new) The method according to claim 16 further comprising the step of drawing the second glass rod to form a third glass rod.

18. (new) The method according to claim 17 further comprising forming additional glass on the third glass rod to form an optical fiber preform.

19. (new) The method according to claim 18 further comprising drawing the optical fiber preform into an optical fiber.

20. (new) An optical fiber made by the method according to claim 18.